

Light casts
by Isobel Wohl
on Alida Sayer's 'Lucent Property'
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You can have faith in this: where an object obstructs light, that object casts a shadow, and so a shadow appears where light does not. By omission, excision, ablation light casts a shadow and this shadow falls. This is why, when light traverses the Tudor windows of the gallery at Anteros Arts Foundation, the metal delineations that give pattern to the mullioned glass cast a patterned shadow, often faint, occasionally bold. For five hundred years, light and shadow have been cast in this pattern, first onto this floor, then for a time into obscurity, onto the plasterboard that hid the windows when shops occupied this space. Subdivided, it held bright windows as shadows. When these were uncovered in the 1980s, light touched the floor again and wrote diamonds, erased them at dusk, rewrote them with the morning.

Today light casts itself where it meets its shadow. In Alida Sayer's *Lucent Property*, paper shows cast light as weight, dripping with the overture of an image. To begin this work, Sayer made images in ink and bleach on paper, responding to the pattern of the windows and incorporating shapes drawn from ancient inscriptions and primitive architectural forms encountered during visits to archaeological sites. She then tore the painted images into strips, a gesture explored in previous bodies of Sayer's work, in which such ruptures are also moments of reconfiguration. Reassembled as sheafs of paper, the images inhabit the gallery space, showing light as weight and sight cast into the room. In the same paper body, a shadow is raised from the stone floor, given full form. Falling and lifting are indiscernable in these latent visions, oblique precisions.

Sayer's site-specific work echoes an early photogram by William Henry Fox Talbot. In his 1835 salt print, light falling through a mullioned window at Lacock Abbey makes a negative that is sufficient to itself, that needs no positive in order to do the work of showing. We can, if we so choose, read in the simplicity of Fox Talbot's newly discovered technique a radical and emergent form of trust. Sayer's work shows a commensurate faith in the exactitude of experimental process. Here, occlusion has nothing to do with a rejection of accuracy; instead, it makes new accuracies, more incisive ones, in which clear sight and bodily weight cannot be separated.

On a day in January 2019--I do not know which one, but I know it is between the 8 and the 19--you were standing on a street in Norwich, Norfolk, England, and in a shopfront window you saw a sheaf of light as paper, represented and embodied as a weight and as an aftermath and as its own rending. You entered the building; you walked through a room and past another doorway. You found this room. Here ink and bleach change roles of light and shadow, and so work casts itself into work like light through a window, projected into sensitised space.

I am not there. But in this interplay of light and time I trust that something reveals itself to you, a negative that needs no positive. On a similar floor, in a similar space, Fox Talbot saw something of unprecedented accuracy and unprecedented elusion emerge on a piece of paper below a mullioned window. Can you imagine a Tudor artisan placing the last piece of glass in the window, seeing the first instant of full pattern illuminate and intervene on the floor? Can you imagine rediscovering this? An illumination is an intervention.

Alida Sayer's *Lucent Property* responds to the 15th century windows in the Anteros gallery space, which were formerly concealed behind temporary walls until their rediscovery and restoration in 1989.

A group of new site-specific sculptures use these historic windows as a lens for considering the latent quality of transparency in apparently solid structures, recalling and laminating the geometric shapes of the panes between sheafs of torn paper and a series of glyphic forms. Alternately they trap, shed, fold and foliate, pouring into and out of the light.

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Materials; Japanese mulberry paper, writing ink, bleach, pigment, acrylic, wood. List of works; *Lucent Property 1* (front window), *Lucent Property 2* (floor), *Lucent Property 3* (alcove), *Lucent Property 4* (fireplace), *Lucent Property 5* (rear window).

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Alida Sayer is a British artist based in Norwich. She has exhibited in solo, group and touring exhibitions in the UK, USA, South Korea and Italy and has given lectures and seminars to both public and Higher Education audiences internationally. She has undertaken residencies at Interviews, South Korea, and Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Aberdeenshire, and was a Research Associate at Firstsite, Colchester 2015-16. In 2016 she was also granted a Visiting Guest Artist Full Fellowship at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica, Venice, and exhibited in *Paper. Publication. Performance* at Lychee One Gallery and *Shucky, Hintut?*, Alida Sayer & Nicole Vinokur at The Hostry, Norwich, a major site-specific installation commissioned by Norwich Cathedral.

Solo exhibitions include *Skins of Now* (2015) at Gallery Sagakhyung, Seoul; *Lexicon* (2016) at Marsden Woo Gallery, London, and *Wet Map Extract* (2017), following a residency at Dove Street Studios, Norwich. In 2017 she was also commissioned by The National Trust to produce a body of site-specific work as part of *The Makers* at Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk. Projects for 2019 include Cley 19, Cley-next-the-Sea, with Isobel Wohl and Laura Bygrave & Alida Sayer at Hungate Church, Norwich, commissioned by Outpost/Heriligion. Examples of Sayer's work can be found in The Anthony Shaw Collection at York Art Gallery and private collections internationally.

Sayer trained at The Royal College of Art (MA Sculpture, 2014) and at Glasgow School of Art (BA Hons Visual Communication, 2009).

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